

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 IO-13 ACDA-12 EB-08
DOTE-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05 /136 W
-----096129 071433Z /50

R 071337Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8625
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USINT HAVANA
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN
COMIDEASTFOR
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 2527

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, PINT, ELTN, ET, DJ, SO
SUBJECT: RAILWAY REPAIRS COMPLETED TO DJIBOUTI BORDER

REF: DJIBOUTI 250 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ETHIOPIA HAS ANNOUNCED COMPLETION OF REPAIRS
OF ADDIS-DJIBOUTI RAILROAD BRIDGES AND TRACK UP TO
DJIBOUTI BORDER. RAILWAY HAS BEEN CLOSED BETWEEN DIRE
DAWA AND DJIBOUTI SINCE JUNE 1, 1977. CONTINUED OPERA-
TION OF RAIL LINE WILL PROBABLY BE TEST OF DJIBOUTI
AND SOMALI INTENTIONS TOWARD ETHIOPIA. IMMEDIATE ECO-
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NOMIC IMPACT FOR ETHIOPIA WILL BE MARGINAL, BUT BENEFIT
TO GENERAL OPULATION DEPENDENT ON IMPORTED GOODS
WILL BE SUBSTANTIAL. END SUMMARY.

1. ETHIOPIAN MEDIA HAVE REPORTED THAT "VICTORY
TRAIN" TRAVELLING FROM ETHIO-DJIBOUTI BORDER TOWN
OF DWELLE TO DIRE DAWA ON JUNE 3. TRAIN STOPPED

AT VARIOUS STATIONS ALONG ROUTE, INCLUDING AYISHA,
LASSARAT, ADIGALA, MELLO, HAREYA, ELBA AND SHENELLE
TO PERMIT "MEMBERS OF ISSA NATIONALITY" AND OTHERS
TO EXPRESS THEIR JOY OVER COMPLETION OF REPAIRS TO
BRIDGES AND RAILWAY. DIRG MEMBERS 2ND LT. DEMISSEW
KASSAYE, COL. ZELEKE BEYENE AND 2ND LT. DEMEKE
BANJAW AS WELL AS HARARGHE REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR
CDR. LEMMA GUTEMA, MIN OF TRANSPORT PERMSEC IBSA
GUTEMA AND RAILWAY COMPANY MANAGER BEKELE GELLETA
PARTICIPATED IN RE-OPENING CELEBRATIONS ALONG ROUTE
AND IN DIRE DAWA.

2. WHILE IT APPEARS REPAIRS ON ADDIS-DJIBOUTI RAIL-
ROAD HAVE BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED, IT HAS NOT
BEEN ANNOUNCED WHEN REGULAR SERVICE FOR CARGO AND
PASSENGERS WILL COMMENCE. THERE IS SPECULATION SER-
VICE COULD BEGIN AS EARLY AS NEXT WEEK (JUNE 12),
HOWEVER, OTHER SOURCES HAVE INDICATED SOME "BUREAU-
CRATIC" PROBLEMS MUST STILL BE RESOLVED. THESE PROB-
LEMS PRESUMABLY INVOLVE OWNERSHIP STATUS AND RESPON-
SIBILITY FOR INDEBTEDNESS OF OWNERS AS OUTLINED IN
REFTEL, PARAS 7-9. (REFTEL IS DEFINITIVE ANALYSIS
ON ETHIO-DJIBOUTI RAILROAD, WITH WHICH EMBASSY
ADDIS IS IN AGREEMENT.)

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3. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RAILWAY RE-OPENING WILL NOT BE IMMEDIATELY SIGNIFICANT FOR ETHIOPIA. IT IS BELIEVED THAT SIX MONTHS OF CARGO DESTINED FOR ETHIOPIA IS ALREADY AWAITING SHIPMENT FROM DJIBOUTI AND THAT BULK IS CONSUMER GOODS RATHER THAN PRODUCTIVE MATERIALS. THIS COULD ALLEVIATE SOME OF GRAIN SHORTAGE PROBLEM. ETHIOPIA MAY ALSO BE ABLE TO CONSERVE SOME PETROLEUM SUPPLIES (POL), THUS SAVING ON FOREIGN EXCHANGE, AND PROBABLY RENEW PROFITABLE TRADE RELATIONS WITH DJIBOUTI. HOWEVER, THESE SMALL GAINS WILL NOT HAVE MAJOR IMMEDIATE ECONOMIC BENEFIT. RE-OPENING OF RAILWAY, AT LEAST INITIALLY, WILL BE

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VIEWED BY PMGSE AS TEST OF POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH DJIBOUTI AND MILITARY/SECURITY RELATIONS WITH SOMALIA.

4. NOW THAT RAILWAY HAS BEEN REPAIRED UP TO DJIBOUTI BORDER, PMGSE WILL BE WATCHING CLOSELY SOMALI AND DJIBOUTIAN ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS TOWARD RE-OPENING AND FUNCTIONING OF ENTIRE LINE. IN MENGISTU'S MOST RECENT WARNING TO SOMALIA (MAY 13) HE CAUTIONED THAT PERSISTENT SOMALI POLITICAL AND MILITARY INTERFERENCE IN ETHIOPIA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS COULD FORCE REVOLUTIONARY ETHIOPIA "TO DRY UP WELL OF TROUBLE AT ITS SOURCE" (ADDIS ABABA 2177). ON DJIBOUTI, PMGSE HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT DJIBOUTI'S CONTINUED SOVEREIGNTY, TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE ARE VITAL TO ETHIOPIA'S NATIONAL INTERESTS (ADDIS ABABA 1485). THIS WAS MOST RECENTLY (MARCH 30) OUTLINED BY FOREIGN MINISTRY (MOFA) OFFICIAL FOLLOWING MOFA STATEMENT (MARCH 25). MOFA STATEMENT AVERRED "ETHIOPIA WILL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO SEE THAT INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF DJIBOUTI IS PRESERVED." THUS, ETHIOPIA MAY USE ANY SOMALI SABOTAGE OF RAILROAD, EITHER INSIDE ETHIOPIA OR DJIBOUTI, AS PRETEXT FOR "LEGITIMATE" REPRISALS AGAINST SOMALI TERRITORY AND/OR JUSTIFICATION FOR COMING TO DJIBOUTI'S "DEFENSE".

5. EMBASSY ADDIS DEFERS TO EMBASSY DJIBOUTI FOR MORE PRECISE ESTIMATE OF WHEN RAILWAY WILL BE FULLY OPERATIONAL AND ANALYSIS OF IMPACT RE-OPENING WILL HAVE ON ETHIO-DJIBOUTI-FRANCO-SOMALI RELATIONS.

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